E/ECA/ICPP/90/14

UNITED NATIONS
Economic Commission for Africa

A VISION

by

Ruth Bamela Engo-Tjega

LC/NAIROBI

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN AFRICA

12-16 February 1990
Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania

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A VISION

I am sitting under a palm tree
My eyes are closed
There's a cool breeze blowing
A VISION

I see a small stream
It is swelling, swelling
I see a lot of water but not a flood
Oh!
This water is taking a strange shape
A triangle
Water in a shape of a triangle?
Yes, water covering the whole triangle
Water, a lot of water but not a flood
A triangle...
Africa!
A VISION

I see a highway going from N'Djamena to
Windhoek through Adamaoua and Bitam
Oh...
Big trucks on the highway!
I see long trucks
Large trucks
Modern trucks
What are these trucks carrying?
Well, one just stopped in front of
A Golden Palace
It is offloading
Bags
Boxes
Cases
Bags, boxes, cases of what!
Wow!
Bags of corn
Cases of okra
Boxes of cassava
Modern trucks, on beautiful
Highways stopping in front of
A Golden Palace and you
Tell me they are carrying
Just plain cassava?
Ah...
I see a Head of Government
Followed by an elegant first lady
Holding a delicate little princess
They just entered their
Dining room
They are eating
But what?
They are eating okra and gari

Not spaghetti
They are eating mangoes and pawpaws
Not peaches
They are eating the food
Their people grow
They are eating the food of their land
A VISION

I see many learned people
Holding books but speaking
Strange languages.
Oho...
A university in a village!
I am now in a classroom
No, I can't believe it
They are teaching science
in Zulu not in Africaans
I see a college of women farmers
They are graduating right here
In the village
Swahili
Haussa
Lingala
Bassa
Bulu
Zulu
Amharic
Academic languages!
A VISION

I see Sahara green
I see Kalahari desert filled with cotton.
Cotton fields again?
Don't tell me we are back to slavery
Cotton fields
With people singing
Not sad songs...
They are not crying
They are singing Makossa!
Trucks on highways again
But this time they go across
From Dar-es-Salaam
To Nouakchott
Through Luanda,
Benin and Ouagadougou
Trucks filled with cotton
They stop in Kumasi
Offload cotton and
Load the finest Kente cloth
They stop in Bamako
Offload cotton and
Load the most colourful tie-dye

They stop in Kano
Offload cotton and
Load Adire
A VISION

Then I see a crowd
Women, men, children
They are peaceful and proud
It's fascinating
All the men look like royals
In their cotton robes.
Women in their Kaba ngondos
Complemented by large turbans
Exude Confidence and Pride
A VISION

I see a wonderful choir
Composed with young people
Coming from North, South, East and West
They are all wrapped in Kente cloth
They walk along the gardens of Achimota College
Singing with one voice
AFRICA
A VISION

Who are the designers of these beautiful clothes?
Who are the Masterminds
Who celebrate the beauty of our people?
Chris Seydou
Not Christian Dior
Anne Bebe
Rose Wisseh
Water not a flood
Cassava eaten in a Golden Palace
A College of Women Farmers
Choirs dressed in Kente cloth
Chris Seydou
Anne Bebe
Rose Wisseh
Ahneva
A F R I C A